Policy Type: Operational **Policy Number: OP-13**

Policy Title: Safety of Children and Teens in the Library

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The Madawaska Valley Public Library (the Library) recognizes that people of all ages have a right to a welcoming, respectful, supportive and safe environment when they visit the Library. However, the Library is a busy public place and staff cannot assume responsibility for children left unattended within our public facility or monitor the activities of all its patrons. This policy establishes the conditions needed to maintain the well-being of children and the responsibilities of their parents/guardians/caregivers.

Section 1: Responsibilities of the Parent/Guardian/Caregiver

1. Responsibility for the welfare and the behaviour of children using the Library ultimately rests with the parent/guardian/caregiver.
2. The Library is governed by the terms in the Ontario *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA) with regards to supervision of children. Specifically:

   > *Section 136 (3) "Leaving child unattended (3) No person having charge of a child younger than 16 shall leave the child without making provision for the child's supervision and care that is reasonable in the circumstances."*

   This legislation does not specify an age at which a child can be left alone, rather the legislation sets out to protect young people from any type of abuse or neglect and requires that all parents and caregivers must make reasonable plans (which will vary according to a child's age, maturity and circumstances) for the supervision of young people under 16 in their care.

3. The Library expects parents/guardians/caregivers and teachers to:
   a) Not leave children requiring supervision unattended in or about library premises
   b) Monitor the use of services and collections by children under their care
   c) Be responsible for borrowed materials and fines incurred by children under their care
   d) Be responsible for the appropriate behaviour of children under their care.

Section 2: Responsibility of Staff /Volunteers

1. The Library staff/volunteers will be guided by this policy in situations where:
   a) an unattended child is found frightened or crying in the Library
   b) an unattended child is perceived to be endangering him/herself
   c) another person in the Library poses a perceived threat to the unattended child
   d) an unattended child exhibits specific inappropriate behaviour
   e) an unattended child is not met by a responsible parent/guardian/caregiver at closing time
   f) A child is consistently left on his or her own in the Library for long periods of time.

2. Where a responsible adult cannot be contacted, library staff will:
   a) not leave a child unattended at closing time
   b) not give the child a ride home
   c) contact local police first, and then the Children's Aid Society (CAS) if so directed by the police and/or the Chief Executive Officer (the CEO) or designate
   d) remain with the child until the parent/guardian/caregiver or proper authorities can take the child home, or into their protection.

3. Truancy – If a school-age child or teen is noticed to be spending considerable time in the Library during the school day, staff may check with the individual and ask that a parent confirm with the Library that he/she is aware of the individual's whereabouts. This applies to those up to the age of 16.

4. Missing Persons - Library staff will not give information to any person over the telephone as to whether a person is currently in the Library or has been in the Library recently. Library staff may offer to take a message and ask the child to call the person back. In the case of a missing person, Library staff will share information with the law enforcement agency requesting specific personal information.

Section 3: Duty to Report

1. The Child, Youth and Family Services Act (Section 125) recognizes that each of us has a responsibility for the welfare of children. It clearly states that members of the public, including professionals, who work with children, have an obligation to report promptly to CAS if they suspect that a child or youth under the age of 16 is or may be in need of protection. The CYFSA defines the phrase "child in need of protection" as including physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, and risk of harm.
2. The duty to report applies to any child who is, or appears to be, under the age of 16 years. It also applies to children subject to a child protection order who are 16 and 17 years old who are, or may be, in need of protection.
3. When staff members have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, they will advise the Library CEO, or the Chairman of the Madawaska Valley Public Library Board (the Board) if the CEO is not available, and together they will promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which is based to the local CAS as stated in the CFSA s.136 (1).

Related Documents:

Ontario *Child and Family Services Act* R.S.O. 1990, s.136 (1) (3).

Policy Number **OP-09** **Use of Internet and Electronic Media Policy**

Policy Number **OP-12** **Children's and Teens' Services Policy**